

I KNEW ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Address of Hon. J. G. Cannon, Danville, Illinois, at Dedication of Circuit
Memorial Marker, on the Lincoln Circuit, Danville, Illinois,
October 20, 1922.*

CHAIRMAN, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I do not often greet an audience in this way, since the women are voting; it is just "Citizens."

I have listened with you to the various addresses, and have enjoyed them.

I am not going to talk a great while, but am going to tell what I know about Lincoln.

I first saw and heard Lincoln at Charleston in 1858, when he debated with Stephen A. Douglas. I had just begun to practice law; had left Indiana and come to Illinois that year.

I heard that debate at Charleston between Lincoln and Douglas; it was the first time I had seen either of them. It was a wonderful debate. I realized that Douglas was a great man—the leader of his party, not only in Illinois, but of the entire country. He was a fine speaker, too, but after hearing them, I thought Lincoln made the better speech.

Of course I was a Republican.

I moved from Shelbyville to Tuscola, in Douglas county. It was a new county, named for Stephen A. Douglas.

I didn't have much money. The hotelkeeper let me stay and I told him I would pay him sometime. Then I had the check to ask him for a loan!

In 1860 I made speeches for Lincoln in Douglas, Clark, Coles and Edgar counties. I rode an old horse and lived off the country. That section was about evenly divided, politically, but in some communities there were many Democrats. These people would not let a Republican come into their homes. They came into Illinois from the south. I told these that I was born in North Carolina. Of course they then took me in and let me stay over night.

I was sent as a delegate to the Republican state convention, which met at Decatur. I rode over from Tuscola to Decatur in a two-horse farm wagon with another man. We carried our grub with us.

The state was pretty well divided as to the selection of a Republican candidate for president. Northern Illinois was favorable to Seward of New York, but the central and southern sections favored Lincoln.

As we drove into Decatur, we saw a man by the name of Vanderen, who knew Lincoln and was always talking about him. As we drove down the street he startled everyone by calling out: "Jesus Christ; there's old Abe. Howdy, Abe." Lincoln looked up, saw who it was, and yelled back: "Well, if it isn't Archibald Vanderen!"

In the afternoon I had a telegram to send and Vanderen walked down to the station with me; it was at the crossing of the two roads—the only telegraph office there. Lincoln also came down with a telegram to send. That was my first formal introduction to Abraham Lincoln.


Vanderen looked at him and said:

"Abe, do you think you ought to be here; you aren't the candidate."

Lincoln answered: "Arch, I am hardly enough of a candidate to stay here, yet I may be enough of a candidate to be here." That was just like Lincoln.

I heard more about Lincoln at that convention. Dick Oglesby and Dennis Hanks were there. Oglesby was a great friend of Lincoln; Hanks was a relative.

Many years before this, while on his way west, Lincoln stopped on his way in Coles county, and a little while in Macon county. Hanks put him to work. Lincoln was always ready to work as a boy and as a man. They split some rails; these were walnut rails. At this convention Oglesby took Dennis Hanks out and



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
State of Indiana through the Indiana State Library

brought two of the rails in. There was a great crowd of delegates in the street. It was about as far as from here to that house when the crowd raised the cry, "Make way, make way for Dick Oglesby and Dennis Hanks."

Dennis Hanks said he and Lincoln cut these rails when he (Lincoln) was on his way west so many years before that time.

The crowd took Lincoln, who had just come up, and passed him over their heads to the stand and the rails were taken up to the stand.

An inquisitive old man said, "Mr. Lincoln, did you make those rails?"

"Dennis Hanks says we cut those rails; I don't know, but I made many a better one."

The rail-splitter, you know; it made him hundreds and thousands of friends and votes in the campaign.

The national Republican convention was held at Chicago and I went over to Shelbyville to see the boys off.

A railroad official there asked me if I didn't want to go to Chicago.

I told him I would like to, but that I did not have the money.

He at once wrote me a pass to Chicago and back to Shelbyville. I reminded him of that afterward.

I met Lincoln after he was elected to the presidency, as he was on his way to Coles county to visit his step-mother for the last time. I was on my way to Mattoon to try a case before the justice of the peace. Tom Marshall of Champaign, a lawyer who long ago "crossed over," was with him.

Marshall said to Mr. Lincoln after we met: "This young man made many speeches for your candidacy in the counties in this part of the state."

"I hope they were good ones, and of course they were," Mr. Lincoln replied.

I did not deny they were, for, indeed, I was a bit stuck on myself over them.

Abraham Lincoln had the courage of his convictions.

He did not hate the South. No, no.

He tried to persuade them to come back. There were some great men in the South, but they wanted to dissolve the Union. The North is glad they failed and the South is, substantially, glad they were whipped. When the first gun was fired at the beginning of that great struggle, and they began to secede and did secede by the wholesale, Lincoln got ready rapidly.

When Lincoln was president, he made Stanton, who was no friend of his, secretary of war.

Lincoln's friends, who knew Stanton, went to the President and said: "Stanton ought to be secretary of war, but we know he insulted you at one time."

Lincoln said: "Let that drop; do you think I ought to make Stanton secretary of war?" "Yes, he is a man of iron and great ability," was the answer.

No further discussion was had. Stanton was made secretary of war.

When the war was over, Lincoln went to the theatre, Stanton went with him. Booth saw Lincoln.

That was a fatal wound and as he died early in the morning, Stanton laid his hand on Lincoln's forehead and said, "He is of the Ages, now."

Yes, he is with the Ages.

After the Master, who was crucified for us, after our Lord and Savior whom we worship in our hearts and thoughts: after Him, I think Lincoln was the greatest character.

Lincoln stands as one of the greatest men and will continue so to stand as long as civilization remains with us.

I had not thought of making a speech, but thought I would reminisce a little. Lincoln was the first president who was assassinated.

Two have been assassinated since that time.

The population as it was a hundred years ago, did not think of killing their officials, but the next one to cross over was the great man, Garfield, and the next was Ohio's favorite son, McKinley. God grant there may never be the assassination of another President of the United States.

Thank you.

